1	2	3	4	5
	Minister of Bangladesh (16-17 June, 2002)	regional developments.	desh over tensions on the Indo-Pakistan border.	Nil
19.	His Majesty King Gyanendra Bir Bikram Shaw Dev, King of Nepal (23—28 June, 2002)	Issues relating to terrorism, Maoist insurgency in Nepal as well as bilateral cooperation including in the trade and economic fields were discussed.	We explained our position and also our concern regarding the ISI misusing Nepalese territory for subversive activities against India. King Gyanendra reiterated that Nepal will not allow its territory to be misused for activities directed against India and assured co-operation in this regard.	Nil (On the margins of the visit, two Joint Task Forces were set up by the business chambers of the two countries for developing co-operation in the fields of water resources and tourism development.)

Foreign Policy to improve relations with neighbouring countries

208. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether the foreign policy adopted by Government and the steps taken by Government have helped to strengthen our relations with neighbouring countries viz. Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan;

(b) if so, in what manner; and

(c) the details of the measures being taken to improve relations with Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH) : (a) to (c) It has been the Government's policy to develop and strengthen relations with all its neighbours. The position with regard to Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan is as follows :—

NEPAL

India and Nepal enjoy a very close relationship. India attaches high priority to strengthening the existing understanding and co-operation with Nepal. Effforts have been made *inter alia* through high level exchanges to further develop friendly relations between India and Nepal. Recent visits of His Majesty King Gyanendra, King of Nepal, from June 23—28, 2002 and H.E. Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, PM of Nepal, from March 20—25, 2002, have contributed significantly in widening and deepening the ongoing cooperation between the two countries. At the official level, Foreign Secretaries, Home Secretaries, Commerce Secretaries and Water Resources Secretaries and other senior officials of the two governments interact regularly to review various aspects of our bilateral cooperation. Bilateral trade, both exports and imports, between India and Nepal, has increased substantially since the signing of the Trade Treaty in 1996. Exports to India now account for nearly 62% of Nepal's global exports while imports from India account for 41% of Nepal's global imports. Indian investment in Nepal has also increased substantially. Indian Joint Ventures now account for over 40% of total Foreign Direct Investment in Nepal. These are in the hotel and tourism sector, food processing, cosmetics, medicines etc. The largest number of tourists visiting Nepal by air are from India. Government of India provides a generous aid package to Nepal with an average annual budget of about Rs. 60 to 75 crores. India has recently completed two prestigious projects, the B.P. Koirala Institute for Health Sciences in Dharan and 22 Bridges on the East West High Way in Nepal. An agreement has been reached with Government of Nepal on April 12, 2002, for laying an 1100 Kms long major Optical Fibre Cable all along the treatfully financed by India—

which would significantly contribute to the telecom infrastructure of Nepal. Cultural linkages are supplemented by over 100 scholarships to Nepalese students offered annually.

BANGLADESH

Relations with Bangladesh continue to be boosted through economic and political cooperation through a number of institutionalised mechanisms. India welcomed the formation of the new Government in Bangladesh that came into being through democratic elections in October 2001. In a unilateral gesture of goodwill and good neighbourliness, India has offered 100% tariff concessions on 16 product goods to Bangladesh to help promote Bangladesh goods into the Indian market. In order to show forward movement on the long pending border demarcation (6.5 kms. remain), India offered a composite package to Bangladesh at the Joint Boundary Working Group talks held in New Delhi in April 2002. This is currently being examined by the Government of Bangladesh. The number and frequency of the meetings between India and Bangladesh on various operational matters has significantly increased over the last few years. There has been a regular flow of high level visits between the two countries.

Begum Khaleda Zia, Prime Minister of Bangladesh called on PM on January 4, 2002 at Kathmandu on the sidelines of the SAARC Summit. Mr. Iqbal H. Mahmood, Bangladesh Minister of State for Power visited India from March 5—8, 2002 at the invitation of our Minister of Power. The Bangladesh Foreign Minister was on an official visit to India from June 16—18, 2002. These visits and meetings that the visiting dignitaries had with the senior Indian political leadership are manifestation of the close and continued dialogue between both countries being pursued on sensitive matters such as border management and insurgency, terrorism, sharing of natural resources and infrastructure etc. Bangladesh has been categorical in expressing that it will not harbour or encourage harbouring of any groups or individuals on its territory acting against or inimical to India's interests. Talks are ongoing to boost infrastructural linkages in terms of increased bus services from Kolkata to Dhaka, commencement of the Dhaka—Agartala bus route and passenger railways from Kolkata to Tangail in Bangladesh. Both sides have also agreed on the need to link Agartala and Akhaura by rail. Government of India is also

in the process of examining the remaining 9 product groups out of 25 for which Government of Bangladesh has sought unilateral tariff concessions. On 16 product groups, unilateral tariff concessions have already been offered to Bangladesh.

The visa regime between India and Bangladesh was revised recently whereby procedure for grant of long term multiple entry visas to businessmen, investors, professionals, research scholars and students has become simplified and short. The people-to-people contact between India and Bangladesh continues to be extensive with our Missions in Bangladesh issuing more than one thousand visas per day. There is no visa fee.

SRI LANKA

Government of India's policy consists of a three-fold commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and to the restoration of a lasting peace through a peaceful negotiated settlement that meets the just aspiration of all elements of Sri Lankan society. Within the ambit of our repeated commitment, we aim at maintaining close and cooperative relations with Sri Lanka at both popular and Governmental levels.

The two Governments have built upon a considerable legacy of historic links, common culture, shared commitment to democracy and a general orientation towards non-alignment in foreign policy. Gradual economic integration of Sri Lanka with India is essential. We have deliberately endeavoured to adopt a non-intrusive approach towards internal developments in Sri Lanka.

There have been frequent exchange of high level visits over the last few years that have helped in building an atmosphere of trust and understanding and have also contributed in no small measure towards strengthening of diverse linkages. Some of the VVIP visits from Sri Lanka over the recent months have included (a) Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe (PMRW)'s visit to India between June 8—12, 2002 at the invitation of Government of India: (b) Minister of Shipping Mr. Rauff Hakeem's visit on May 23—27, 2002: (c) President

Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga (PCBK)'s visit from April 22—26, 2002; and (d) Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's first visit from December 22—24, 2001. This had been his first visit abroad as new Prime Minister.

Foreign Office Consultations between Sri Lanka and India were held in New Delhi on February 25, 2000 after a gap of 7 years. An agreement to establish a Free Trade Area between India and Sri Lanka was signed during President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga's State Visit to India from December 27—30, 1998.

The Minister for External Affairs on his first trip abroad on July 10—12, 2002 also visited Sri Lanka. During the visit he announced that Government of India would give a grant of US $ 7.5 million to the Government of Sri Lanka for setting up an India Cancer Centre.

India is committed to strengthening and deepening of relations with Sri Lanka especially in the economic sector. Discussions will be held to take relations beyond the Free Trade Agreement to consider coperation including services, technology transfers, investment etc. benefiting from our mutual strengths.

PAKISTAN

Government is committed to establishing peaceful, friendly and co-operative relations with Pakistan. However, Pakistan must put a permanent end to cross-border infiltration and terroism directed against India.

List of criminals furnished by Bangladesh

†209. SHRI HARENDRA SINGH MALIK : Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government of Bangladesh has forwarded a list of persons residing in India wanted by Bangladesh for committing crimes in Bangladesh;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.